

The Sun's effect on Earth

The sun shines on Earth's surface and warms it. The land absorbs sunlight. The sunlight is changed to heat. Not all places on the Earth absorb the same amount of sunlight. The Earth heats unevenly.

Order of the eight planets

A planet is a large body of rock or gas that orbits the sun. The planet closest to the sun is Mercury, followed by Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

The **inner planets** Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars, lie between the sun and the **asteroid belt**. They all have rocky surfaces. They are also smaller than most of the outer planets. None of them has more than two moons. **Mercury** is the closest planet to the sun. It is covered with craters. It is about the size of the Earth's moon and has a thin atmosphere. **Venus**, the second planet from the sun, is about the same size as Earth. It is dry and has a thick atmosphere that traps heat. **Earth** is the third planet from the sun. It is the largest of the inner planets. It has one natural satellite, the moon. It is the only planet that has liquid water. It is the only known planet to support life. **Mars**, the fourth planet from the sun, is sometimes called the red planet. Its atmosphere is thin and consists mainly of carbon dioxide. The gas freezes, forming ice caps in winter. Mars has volcanoes, canyons craters and sand dunes.



Mercury



Venus



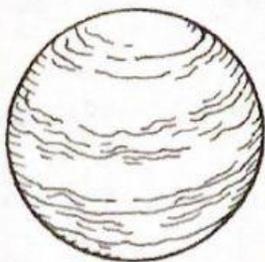
Earth



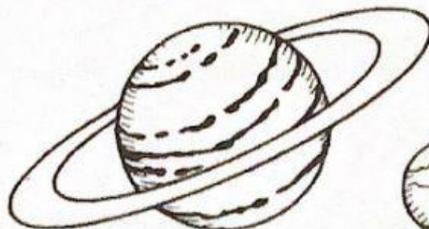
Mars

Outer planets

On the other side of the asteroid belt are the outer planets – Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune. These planets are large spheres made up mostly of gases and are often referred to as gas giants. **Jupiter**, the fifth planet from the sun, is the largest planet in our solar system. At least 16 moons orbit around it. It is twice the size of Earth. Its energy causes a circular storm known as the Great Red Spot. It is surrounded by a system of thin, dark rings. **Saturn** is the sixth planet from the sun. It is the second largest planet in the solar system. It has at least 18 named moons. The many bright rings that surround the planet are Saturn's most famous features. **Uranus**, the seventh planet from the sun is a blue-green ball of gas and liquid. It is the third largest planet in the solar system and has at least 15 moons. **Neptune** is the eighth planet and the furthest planet from the sun. It has eight moons. It is a frozen gas planet as blue as the deep blue sea.



Jupiter



Saturn



Uranus



Neptune

Date: _____

1. Which planet is closest to the sun? [1] _____

2. Which is the second planet from the sun that is dry and traps heat? [1]

3. Which is the largest of the inner planets and the third from the sun? [1]

4. Which planet is sometimes called the red planet? [1]

5. Which is the largest planet in our solar system? [1]

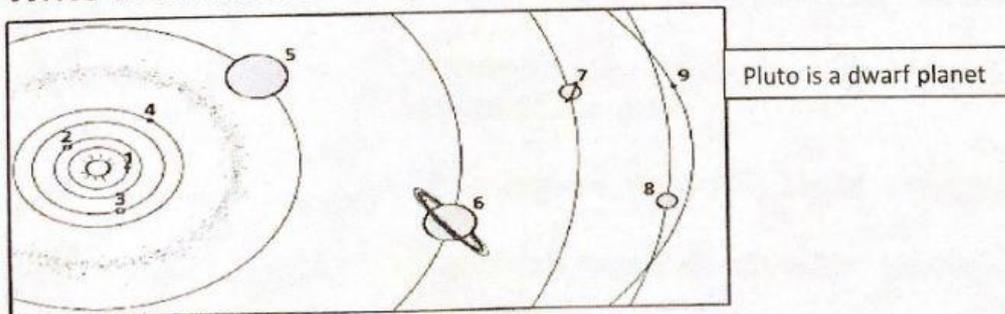
6. How many moons orbit around this planet? [1]

7. Which planet has 18 moons and is the sixth planet? [1]

8. Name the planet that has blue-green ball of gas and liquid. [1]

9. Name the planet that has 8 moons and has a faint ring. [1]

Write the names of the planets on the lines below.



1. _____ 4. _____ 7. _____

2. _____ 5. _____ 8. _____

3. _____ 6. _____